

I claim:

1. An information exchange system comprising:
a database coupled to a communication network, said database storing a
5 demand entry comprising shipping demand specifications and a carrier entry
comprising carrier availability information, wherein said demand entry and said
carrier entry arrive through said communication network; and
a logic unit coupled to said database, said logic unit receiving a user request
and at least one of said demand entry and said carrier entry through said
10 communication network and formulating a response to said user request.
2. The information exchange system of claim 1, further comprising a link
to a partner system comprising a partner database, wherein said partner database
contains entries comprising at least one of demand specifications and carrier
15 availability information.
3. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said logic unit
notifies a user when one of a demand entry and a carrier entry is received.
- 20 4. The information exchange system of claim 1, further comprising an
Enterprise Resource Planning system that forwards shipping demand specifications
and carrier availability information to said database.
- 25 5. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said logic allows
a user to define a subgroup within said exchange system and limit unrestricted
access of at least a portion of said database only to members of said subgroup.
- 30 6. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said user request
comprises a request for a demand report containing at least a portion of shipping
demand specifications.

7. The information exchange system of claim 6, wherein said user request further comprises a criterion said logic unit uses to decide entries to include in said demand report.

5 8. The information exchange system of claim 6, wherein said communication network is the Internet and said demand report comprises hyperlinks to other reports containing at least one of a shipping demand specification and carrier availability information.

10 9. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said user request comprises a carrier availability report containing at least one entry comprising carrier availability information stored in said database.

15 10. The information exchange system of claim 9, wherein said user request further comprises a criterion said logic unit uses to decide entries to include in said carrier availability report.

20 11. The information exchange system of claim 9, wherein communication network is the Internet and said carrier availability report comprises hyperlinks to other reports containing details of carrier availability information.

25 12. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said shipping demand specification comprises at least one of a route, a point of origin, a destination, a vehicle type, date(s) of availability, cargo dimensions, cargo weight, cargo content, and an offer price.

30 13. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said carrier availability information comprises at least one of carrier mobile unit routes, point of origin, destination, vehicle type, date(s) of availability, cargo dimensions, cargo weight, cargo content, and a price.

14. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said logic unit alerts a user when one or more parameters of a shipping demand entry match one or more parameters of a carrier availability entry.

5 15. The information exchange system of claim 14, wherein said logic unit provides a user with an option to make capacity-based arrangements.

10 16. The information exchange system of claim 14, wherein said logic unit provides a user with an option to conduct a transaction over said communication network.

15 17. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said user request identifies at least one demand entry, and wherein said report is a match report listing carrier entries having parameters that at least partially match the parameters of the identified demand entry.

20 18. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said user request identifies at least one carrier availability entry and said report is a match report listing shipping demand entries having parameters that at least partially match the parameters of the identified carrier availability entry.

25 19. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said user request comprises one of an implied request and an express request for said logic unit to store received information in said database.

 20. The information exchange system of claim 1, further comprising a fleet monitoring system that monitors locations of delivery vehicles.

30 21. The information exchange system of claim 20, wherein said logic unit alerts a delivery vehicle when a new demand entry matches a location of said delivery vehicle as determined by said fleet monitoring system.

22. The information exchange system of claim 20, wherein each of said delivery vehicles contains a GPS unit and a wireless modem that transmits location data for each of said delivery vehicles to said fleet monitoring system.

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23. The information exchange system of claim 22, wherein said wireless modem provides an Internet connection to the fleet monitoring system.

24. The information exchange system of claim 20, wherein at least one of said delivery vehicles contains a portal allowing a driver to see demands from the database.

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25. The information exchange system of claim 20, wherein a GPS unit and a wireless modem in one of said delivery vehicles automatically transmit location data for said delivery vehicle to the fleet monitoring system, and the logic uses the location data in determining whether to send an alert to the delivery vehicle.

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26. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said logic unit formulates said response when a new entry is received.

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27. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said logic unit formulates said response at a predetermined time interval.

28. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said response is a business analysis report comprising at least one of said demand entries and said carrier entries entered into said database during a selected date range and details of transactions relating to said entries.

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29. The information exchange system of claim 1, wherein said shipping demand specification comprises an offer price and said carrier availability information comprises a bid price, and wherein said logic unit arranges a

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transaction between a shipper and a carrier based on the difference between said offer price and said bid price.

30. A method comprising:

- 5 receiving a request from a user;
receiving at least one of a demand entry and a carrier entry from said user, said demand entry comprising shipping demand specifications and said carrier entry comprising carrier availability information;
10 storing said entry in a database; and
using said entries to formulate a response to said request.

31. The method of claim 30, further comprising accessing a partner database and transferring data from said partner database to said database.

- 15 32. The method of claim 31, wherein said data comprises at least one of shipping demand specification and carrier availability information.

33. The method of claim 30, wherein said database receives at least one of a request and an entry from Enterprise Resource Planning system.

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34. The method of claim 30, further comprising allowing a user to define a subgroup of shippers and carriers and granting unrestricted access to said database only to said subgroup.

- 25 35. The method of claim 30, further comprising comparing parameters of said demand entry and parameters of said carrier entry and notifying said user if parameters of said demand entry at least partially match the parameters of said carrier entry.

- 30 36. The method of claim 35, wherein said demand entry comprises an offer price and said carrier entry comprises a bid price, further comprising executing a

transaction over a communication network between a first user who entered said offer price and a second user who entered said bid price.

37. The method of claim 35, further comprising providing a user with at
5 least one of matching demand specifications and matching availability information.

38. The method of claim 30, wherein said request comprises at least one criterion and wherein said response comprises at least one entry that meets said criterion.

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39. The method of claim 30, wherein said entry comprises at least one of a route, a point of origin, a destination, a vehicle type, date(s) of availability, cargo dimensions, cargo weight, cargo content, and a price.

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40. The method of claim 30, further comprising monitoring locations of delivery vehicles.

41. The method of claim 39, further comprising alerting a delivery vehicle when the location of said delivery vehicle matches a parameter of a demand entry.

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42. The method of claim 39, wherein said delivery vehicle comprises a location determining unit and a wireless connected to a communication network.